Ministry of Economic Affairs

Bundesministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft

REGERINGSKANSLIET

Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries of Denmark

Commissioner for Health and Food Safety

Mr. Vytenis Andriukaitis

Date: 11 MAI 2015

Dear Commissioner Andriukaitis,

As you are aware, like in many other countries animal welfare is a high political priority in Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark. We hold the view that the European Union and its Member States should join efforts with the aim to improve animal welfare and work to maintain their global leading position in the area of animal welfare - also after the expiration of the Animal Welfare Strategy in 2015. We do also acknowledge the great achievements our farmers have already reached with regard to animal welfare and it is also our goal to strengthen animal production within the EU.

On 29-30 April we all participated in the international conference "Improving pig welfare – what are the ways forward?" in Copenhagen. We are sorry that you were not able to attend the conference yourself but we can inform you that the conference brought together stakeholders, including international scientific experts, farmer organizations, representatives of animal welfare organizations etc. At the conference presentations on recent knowledge on pig welfare, workshops and debates served to provide a common understanding of the most important issues on pig welfare that needs to be dealt with for all participants. We will report from the conference at the Council meeting on May 11.

Meanwhile we would like to submit to you our position paper – signed during the conference - with a request to improve the welfare conditions for pigs at EU-level. You will find the position paper enclosed with this letter. Council Directive 91/630/EEC, which was last amended in 2001 calls for a revision. Since 2001 new scientific evidence, practical experience, new production systems and consumer awareness indicate that a number of provisions need to be adjusted to the latest scientific findings, technical innovations and socio-economic trends.

In the light of this the governments of Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark urge the European Commission to amend the EU-legislation on pigs in the near future. In our position paper you will find a detailed description of the areas where we find the need to propose specific initiatives for better regulation and simplifications and to initiate further studies.

The following are the topics, which most urgently call for action:

- Reduce the number of tail docked pigs

- Reduce need to resort to surgical castration
- Group housing systems for all pregnant sows and gilts, and for sows and gilts in the service area
- Research with a view to loose housing in the farrowing pen

In our view a revision of the Pig Directive is necessary if the EU wishes to conduct an ambitious animal welfare policy. In the longer term EU need to raise the bar on animal welfare in order to stay competitive in the global market. We appreciate the Commissions ongoing work and encourage the Commission to allocate sufficient resources to the work with animal welfare in DG SANTE.

Further, we will take the opportunity to recall also the declaration of Vught and the position paper on animal transport already presented to you, as well as the recently successfully completed pilot study on a European network of reference centres for animal welfare. Also, as mentioned in the Vught declaration, the establishment of a European Platform on animal welfare would be useful for sharing best practise, new developments and for finding new ways forward. We are determined to present you a suggestion for a possible set up within near future.

We herewith express our hope for a fruitful discussion in the Agrifish Council and for a proactive follow up from the Commission and other EU Member States.

Yours sincerely,

Sharon Dijksma

Minister for Agriculture, The Netherlands

Christian Schmidt

Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture, Germany

Sven-Erik Bucht

Minister for Agriculture, Sweden

Dan Jørgensen

Minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, Denmark